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WORK CAMPING IN EGYPT

by Rev. Willis A. McGill

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By far the most interesting activity of the summer was the Work Camp. As you know, this was the Egypt-end of a project that has been stirring the young people of our church in America for the past year. Eleven carefully selected Americans arrived from the States, at their own expense, in late June and, after a couple of sightseeing days in Cairo, came on to Alexandria two days prior to the official opening of the Work Camp. Some of us met them at the train station here and took them out to the Camp. Then they were entertained at our Sidi Bishr camp the next evening, at which time we all had an opportunity to get acquainted. They were a grand group and everybody took to them at once. On their first Sabbath here they were guests at one of our Alexandria churches (where my former Youth Work assistant is now pastor - Rev. Labib Qoldas) and on that occasion I had to act as interpreter: summarizing, for the benefit of the Work Campers, the pastor's morning message, and repeating, in Arabic, for the benefit of the congregation, each Work Camper's introduction of himself or herself.

THE BEGINNING OF THINGS

The first period of the Work Camp began the evening of July 5, when we met the Egyptian contingent and took them out to the Camp, located at Agamy, 19 kilometers west of Alexandria. All in all there were 15 Egyptian workers (10 fellows and 5 girls), plus the 6 fellows and 5 girls of the American contingent, plus the Ed Fairmans and Ted Pollocks (with 6 children between them), and Rev. Ayyad Zakhary (who, with Ed Fairman, was co-director; Ted Pollock being the Work Boss). The rented villa served as their kitchen, dining room, storage center for personal effects and valuables, and sick bay. It was a couple of hundred yards from the actual work site, on which eight tents had been pitched for living quarters. At the site a well and pump had been installed prior to the beginning of things, plus a shower and toilet house for girls and another for boys. A tarpaulin-covered "shed" was erected as a kind of work bench for carpentering and iron work, and part of the foundation had been dug for the main building which was the major construction objective of the Work Camp. Building materials, such as cement, gravel, reinforcing iron, and cement building blocks were delivered at the site from time to time as required by the young builders.

A FULL SCHEDULE

Severol worked ot corpentering (mainly moking forms for the pouring of the moin supporting pillars), some worked ot cement-mixing (all done by hond), some worked ot brick-laying, etc., etc. The work was hard, the glare of the sun and

the blowing of the wind perpetual, ond the days long. Ted Pollock had everybody rise at 5:30 a.m. so as to be ready for an hour's labor before breokfast. That wos from 6 to 7. At 7:30 breokfast was served over at the villa, ond by 8:30 everyone was back at work again - always leaving a group on K.P. duty, helping to prepare mid-morning lemonade and popcorn, paring vegetables for lunch, cleaning up the toilets, etc. Work stopped ot 12:30, leaving o half-hour in which to cleon up before 1 o'clock lunch. Then there was rest until 3, an hour's freedom for bathing in the seo until 4, ond then onother work period until 6:30, with supper served at 7. After breakfost in the morning and after supper there were worship, Bible Study, and discussion periods. Understondobly, there was lots of dozing at the evening periods, for the whole group wos very tired. Saturday afternoons and all of Sundays were rest times which were much oppreciated by all. During the first half of July o boating picnic in the horbor was arronged in their behalf by the missionories of Sidi Bishr and Schutz. During the second half of July another picnic was arranged, olso by the missionaries, in the beautiful Schutz gorden. Buses were hired to bring the work campers in and take them back on those occasions. The first Egyptian contingent worked for two weeks and then was replaced by a second, which worked the last holf of July.

WE CARRY ON ALONE

At the end of July practically all the American work campers left, according to plon, as well os the Fairmans and Ted Pollocks. But the Synod's Committee hod planned to continue the Work Camp for o third period of two weeks, partly to take

core of some of the mony Egyption young people who wonted to hove o port in it, ond portly to get more of the construction work done. So, in order to provide for leodership replocements, severol of us missionories were osked, olong with some newly-orrived Egyptions, to "toke over". One of the originol

eleven Americons (Larc Smith by nome, from Clevelond, Ohio, ond o student ot Sterling College) was enjoying himself so much thot he chonged his trovel plons ond remoined for this third period. To him wos ossigned the job of Work Boss - ond he did very well, oltho it was his first experience ot thot or ot work comping. A second of the original eleven Americons wos o girl: Miss Jocqueline Mortin, the only colored Americon in the group, ond o very fine girl. She comes from Knoxville, where her fother is the new Deon of the College there. She hod been persuoded by the Mission's committee for the operotion of our little Americon School for Missionories' Children to remoin in Egypt os o teocher in thot school. Therefore, since she wos not to return to the Stotes, she olso remoined for the third period, ond endeored herself to everyone. She wos porticulorly helpful in teoching the new orrivols oll the new songs thot hod featured the previous two periods. A teocher from our Girls' School in Tonto took over the monogement of the kitchen ond did on excellent job. The missionories who ottended ond who helped in the odministrotion were Glen Fleming, Jock Thompson, ond myself. Gene Ammon wos oble to be with us for one week ond helped much with the corpentering. Our Billy hod begged to come, os hod his chum, young Poul Mc Clonohon. With them wos onother of Billy's young friends: Sherif Nodo, son of our long-time Egyption friends, Doro ond Amin Nodo. The three were put in the some tent with some of us who could keep on eye on them. We wonted to be sure they didn't suffer from the strenuous work, nor yet feel lost omong people they didn't know. They did very well, oll three of them. They were well occepted by the others ond they held up their end of the job pretty well. And every one of them greotly enjoyed the experience. They returned with heolthy

tons ond hordened muscles.

WHAT A DAY!

Before the third period begon, the foundation, moin pillors, and walls of the principol building hod been erected by the two eorlier groups. We set to work to loy o concrete floor, to pour o section of the roof with supporting beams, ond to put reinforced concrete roofs on the two toilet-shower units which begon the season with temporory mot roofing (which were blown

off in o heovy wind one night). The building itself is o mere 97-1/2 feet long by 32-1/2 feet wide. It will eventuolly house kitchen, store-room, ond dining hall - the lotter with on eosy copacity of 200 diners ot once. Altho the terroin is pretty flot out there, what elevotion there is wos put to good use in the locotion of this building which now gives a gorgeous view of the seo. It sits back in obout 100 yords from the beoch. Well, onywoy, we completed our work-objective, the climox coming on the doy we poured the section of the roof ond beoms covering the store-room ond kitchen. Whot o day thot wos! We'll never forget it!

While woiting for the necessory corpentry work to be completed, the hord-lobor gong (sometimes we colled ourselves the choin-gong) over which I hod outhority, got into proctice by pouring most of the floor. In those eorly stages we hod to do oll our concrete mixing by hand, which wos very rugged. But thru o contact of Glen Fleming's we were oble to secure the loon of o smoll, motor-run mixer which orrived just the doy befare the pouring of the roof. What o boon thot turned out to be! On thot cruciol Wednesdoy it kept running oll doy long ond kept us running too. We hod previously stocked neor it the necessary piles of sond, grovel and cement. So o gong of four or five kept busy all doy feeding the proper proportions into the mixer (with woter, of course). Up in the roof oreo was o smoll group of three or four whose job wos to properly distrib-

ute and tamp the fresh cancrete. But the bulk af us, including the "chain-gang" spent the day canveying the pans fram mixer ta raaf. An inclined "cat-walk" had been built the day befare, and we lined up an it, three ar four feet apart, and passed the cancrete pans up from ane ta another, then passed the "empties" dawn again.

Just in the middle af aur afternaan's tail, when we were abaut two-thirds af the way thraugh (it shauld be brought aut that ance yau start ta paur a sectian af raaf yau can't stap until it's all dane ar else there'll be a weakness in the cancrete where yau left aff) sameane spatted a bus approaching fram a distance. Some af the gang were very weary, and we had just pramised them a brief rest. The mixer had been shut aff and we were passing up the last af its previaus mix. When the bus was spatted I remembered that it was the day when Delta Presbytery was ta meet and I'd heard that an attempt was gaing to be made to have some of them visit the Work Camp. The arrival af the bus cauld anly mean ane thing: practically the whole Presbytery (pastars, elders, and guests) were caming enmasse. Sa I shauted that we'd have ta pastpane aur "time-aut", since it was anly right that the visitars shauld find us in the midst af real labar - nat taking it easy. In a jiffy we had things gaing again, and by the time the bus had made its way aver the raugh apprach and disgarged its accupants, we were back in the full rhythm af aur wark. The visitars taak in the sight incredulausly. When we finally stopped far a tea break 20 ar 30 minutes later (serving the guests first) many af them crept up the "cat-

walk" ta see what the work at the tap laaked like. Needless ta say, they were impressed and pleased. We had just given aur yauth wark the very best kind af publicity. We finished the raaf at 7:20 that night - thanks ta the mixer. After that day, the rest was prasaic!

AMERICAN WORK CAMPERS

ELNORA BAKER

JOSEPH BARR

ROBERT BAUGH

ETHEL GALLOWAY

GORDON KUNDE

JACQUELYNE MARTIN

ROBERT MONTGOMERY

JACK ROGERS

LUCILLE SHANNON

LARC SMITH

DONNA WAGNER

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